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SUBJECT: GOC PRESENTS HUMAN RIGHTS STATUS REPORT TO G-24
AND NGOS IN PREPARATION FOR CARTAGENA

Summary

11. (SBU) On December 15, President Uribe, Vice President Santos and several other GOC officials presented a human rights status report to the G-24 Ambassadors and NGO representatives in preparation for the London Declaration follow-up conference in Cartagena on February 3-4, 2005. The proceedings were carried by local media. The GOC reported that nearly all violence indicators, including murders, forced displacement, and kidnappings, had decreased significantly since 2002, and military operations against the illegal armed groups were working. The GOC highlighted progress in key human rights programs, including efforts to develop a National Action Plan for Human Rights, expanding the early warning system and state protection for threatened individuals, and developing a national plan to address anti-personnel landmines. It reported on the 45 hours of consultations conducted over the last couple of months with the NGO community on the 27 recommendations of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and announced an agreement to share intelligence files with NGOs. Santos, who led the substantive part of the GOC presentation, said the Uribe administration plans to complete the National Action Plan for Human Rights and strengthen its human rights programs in 2005. G-24 chair Ambassador Marina Celina Azevedo of Brazil read a statement on behalf of the group (see para 13). Following the formal presentations, President Uribe conducted a spirited exchange with NGO representatives. Santos and Foreign Minister Barco, who was also present, characterized the President's encounter with NGOs as much tamer than past ones. However, several NGOs questioned the government's claims of progress and expressed doubt about its capacity to improve the country's human rights situation.

End Summary.

12. (U) President Uribe, Vice President Santos, Foreign Minister Barco, Presidential Advisor for Social Action Hoyos Aristizabal met with G-24 Ambassadors and representatives from eight NGOs on December 15. Director of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Michael Fruhling also made a brief presentation. NGOs represented were Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines, Confederacion Colombiana de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales, Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social, Dialogo Inter-Agencial en Colombia, Consejo Nacional de Planeacion, Federacion Colombiana de Municipios, Asociacion Nacional de Industriales and Fundacion Restrepo Barco. The meeting lasted almost four hours.

Positive Statistics

13. (U) Vice President Santos reported the following statistics on human rights indicators for 2002, 2003 and the first 11 months of 2004, respectively:

- murders: 28,837, 23,031 and 18,579 (down 20 and 14 percent from the year before)
- murders of labor unionists: 121, 54 and 37 (down 55 and 27 percent)
- murders of mayors: 13, 9 and 14 (down 31 and up 75 percent)
- murders of councilmen: 80, 75 and 18 (down 6 and 73 percent)
- murders of indigenous people: 180, 164 and 79 (down 9 and 45 percent)
- murders of teachers: 79, 41 and 57 (down 48 and up 39 percent)
- massacre victims: 680, 504 and 238 (down 26 and 48 percent)
- massacres: 115, 94 and 43 (down 18 and 49 percent)
- murders of journalists: 10, 7 and 3 (down 43 and 50 percent)
- kidnapping victims: 2,986, 2,200 and 1,250 (down 26 and 41 percent)
- attacks on towns: 32, 5 and 15 (down 84 and up 200 percent)
- attacks on infrastructure: 905, 494 and 264 (down 45 and 45 percent)
- forced displacement: 379,289, 219,431 and 124,284 (down 42 and 41 percent)

14. (U) Santos said security forces have killed and captured the following numbers of illegal armed group members in 2002, 2003 and the first 11 months in 2004, respectively:

- killed paramilitaries: 187, 346 and 533 (up 85 and 78 percent)
- captured paramilitaries: 1,356, 3,166 and 4,455 (up 133 and 58 percent)
- killed guerrillas: 1,690, 1,919 and 1,808 (up 14 and one percent)
- captured guerrillas: 3,763, 6,967 and 5,872 (up 85 and down ten percent)

National Action Plan for Human Rights

15. (U) Of 171 countries that have pledged to develop a National Action Plan for Human Rights, Santos underscored that Colombia would be one of only 20 countries that had complied by 2005. He reported that the Uribe administration has approximately USD 325,000 (880 million pesos) available for the plan, 60 percent of which is provided by Switzerland and UNHCHR. In January 2005, the GOC will consult with civil society about the plan. The GOC has incorporated human rights into departmental development strategies. Thirty departments and 149 municipalities (equivalent to U.S. counties) have humanitarian action plans.

Early Warning System and High Risk Communities

16. (U) In 2004, there were 83 risk reports and 58 follow-up investigations, which resulted in 36 early warnings. The GOC established a regional risk report for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region and is working on reports for Arauca and Valle del Cauca Departments. Uribe and Santos credited the early warning system, increased state presence, and support from civil society with decreases in internal displacement, violence, and massacres. The GOC has identified ten high risk areas in the country and will begin augmenting state presence there on January 15. The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and USAID are each providing approximately USD 132,000 (330 million pesos) to the initiative.

State Protection

17. (U) The GOC had USD 15,000 (37.2 million pesos) in 2004 for protecting threatened individuals, seventeen percent of which was from USAID. In 2004, 4,249 individuals received assistance from this program. Since 1999, 17,738 people have been helped. The GOC trained 204 individuals in preventative security and re-located more than 800 threatened teachers.

Antipersonnel Mines

18. (U) Working with NGOs and the international community, the GOC has developed a National Action Plan Against Landmines. The military destroyed its last arsenal of stored landmines on October 24.

Cooperation with Civil Society

19. (U) Hoyos stressed GOC efforts to expand its consultative process with civil society. In 2004, the GOC held more than 20 meetings with civil society representatives to discuss human rights, including a meeting between President Uribe and international NGOs on August 5 and between the Defense Minister and military high command with civil society. The Ministry of Defense agreed to share intelligence files with NGOs under supervision from the Inspector General's Office. The Police and military will each form special committees to review the files and share requested information. The NGOs will request specific files, after which time the Defense Ministry will have two months to respond.

Social and Economic Indicators

110. (U) According to the GOC, GDP grew 3.7 percent in the first three trimesters of 2004. Unemployment fell 12.4 percent this year. Since 2004, the GOC created 734,000 new spaces in public schools, and in 2004, 93,000 students received education assistance from royalties. There are 124,000 adults enrolled in literacy programs and 87,000 at-risk individuals enrolled in education programs. The GOC provided 35,154 scholarships for higher education and 77,000 housing subsidies in 2004. There are nine state-funded departmental medical missions.

2005 Plans

¶11. (U) Santos said the GOC has the following goals for 2005:

- Complete the National Action Plan for Human Rights by June or July (On December 16, Santos and Fruhling signed a letter of understanding stating that the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia will advise the Vice Presidency on the Human Rights Action Plan.)
- Strengthen the culture of human rights
- Develop a policy to fight impunity
- Establish human rights programs in 350 municipalities
- Expand state presence in the ten designated high-risk areas
- Improve internal investigations of the armed forces
- Complete review of intelligence files
- Develop an information database on human rights
- Achieve optimal functioning of the early warning system

NGOs Skeptical

¶12. (SBU) NGO representatives peppered Uribe with questions and comments for almost two hours. The exchange was spirited. NGOs questioned GOC statistics and capacity to address the country's human rights problems. The president of the Alliance of Social Organizations, referring to statistics from the Comptroller's Office, pointed out that Colombia continues to suffer from widespread poverty. The Secretary General of the National Indigenous Organization

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walked out of the meeting, at one point, complaining that the Uribe administration was doing little to stop what he described as genocide against indigenous people. Others questioned GOC implementation of the 27 recommendations of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Uribe responded that he respected the recommendations and wished to continue discussing their implementation with the OHCHR, but reiterated that they were recommendations and not the only way to measure GOC progress in human rights. That said, he asked OHCHR director Fruhling how many recommendations the GOC had implemented. Fruhling demurred, stating that implementation was a process, that there was a "positive dynamic," and that progress was being made. He cited one area where more needed to be done: incorporating training in human rights and international humanitarian law for all members of the security forces. (Fruhling said afterwards that giving a scorecard in a public forum in front of Uribe and NGO representatives would have been counterproductive.) Still other NGOs questioned the GOC approach to the peace process, criticizing ongoing paramilitary demobilizations without a law in place to deal with those who are guilty of violent crimes beyond membership in an illegal armed group. Uribe responded with a passionate defense of his democratic security policy and the paramilitary demobilizations underway.

G-24 Statement

¶13. (U) An unofficial translation of the G-24 statement negotiated by G-24 members in Bogota over the last month and delivered by outgoing G-24 President, Ambassador Maria Celina Azevedo follows:

Begin Text:

Mr. President,

¶11. As you know, the G-24 was formed as an informal group of countries to support the Colombian Government to fulfill the principles and goals established in the London Declaration on July 10, 2003.

¶12. In this sense, we want to underline the accomplishments achieved by the Colombian Government in the development of different themes related to the London Declaration and we invite the authorities to follow the aforementioned process. We would like to affirm our role as facilitators with respect to all the initiatives related to the London Declaration, and we consider dialog as the ideal path for the search for solutions to the country's internal issues. We reiterate our commitment to continue looking for ways for the international community to contribute to the realization of the goals of

the London Declaration.

13. We support the deepening of mechanisms for dialogue between the Colombian Government and Civil Society, represented by different groups of NGOs, and with the international community, for better coordinated international cooperation, in such a way that the government can achieve its proposed objectives. Considering the important role that civil society plays in an open and transparent democracy its participation during the meeting in Cartagena would be valuable.

14. Although a long road is ahead, we take note of the different methods that have been and continue being taken by the Colombian Government with an eye towards fulfilling the recommendations of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Colombian Government can continue counting on the support of our governments for this objective.

15. We want to highlight the Colombian Government's decision to contribute to the cessation of anti-personnel mines, especially the destruction of military landmine reserves. We recognize such an action as an important step forward and demonstration of commitment to the consolidation of International Humanitarian Law in Colombia, and we urge the illegal armed groups to follow the example, in such a way to protect the civilian population from the damage caused by the use of anti-personnel mines.

16. We note that overcoming the conflict and realizing peace with the illegal armed groups requires a legal framework that emphasizes the principles of Truth, Justice, and Reparation and that respects Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. Likewise, we note that demobilization processes should make use of disarmament methods and clear strategies for reinsertion for the individuals that participate in demobilization. In this sense, we invite the government to take the necessary measures.

17. In this context, we reiterate our call to all the illegal armed groups to agree to a cessation in hostilities and move towards peace talks.

18. We condemn the evil practices of kidnapping, forced disappearances, and extra-judicial executions. We reiterate the need for all kidnapped persons in Colombia to be released immediately.

19. We reaffirm our condemnation of drug trafficking and any form of violence and terrorist acts, of which, among others, the victims are the civilian population and especially the most vulnerable groups of civilians. We therefore repeat the need for these acts to be prosecuted with full respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

10. We believe it is of extreme importance to reinforce the special mechanisms of support and protection for the most vulnerable segments of Colombian society, such as displaced persons, indigenous and afro-Colombian communities, union leaders, human rights defenders, and other members of civil society who have been threatened, and for their relatives, and for the women and children affected by the conflict and the humanitarian crisis.

11. As a result, we support the Humanitarian Action Plan and the inclusive way in which the government is developing it, with support from the international community and civil society. We hope the process will conclude soon.

12. We cannot forget to recognize the important contribution of the United Nations, Organization of American States, International Organizations, and other actors in Colombia in the search for a solution to the grave problems of the population that is affected by the activities of the illegal armed groups. In a very notable way, it is equally as important to underscore the efforts undertaken toward the search for a negotiated peace.

13. Likewise, we reiterate our support for the fight against drug trafficking, for the elimination of violence that drug trafficking brings, and for the means to overcome these circumstances.

14. Finally, we want to express our satisfaction with the high level meeting to follow up the London Declaration in February 2005. We hope the meeting strengthens the efficacy and coordination of international cooperation, and can take note of the advances made in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia. We want to emphasize that accomplishments in this field are beginning to be noticeable.

The advances that can be seen should not impede recognition that much remains to be done to achieve difficult and sustainable progress in constructing peace.

Thank you very much.

End Translation.

Begin Spanish Text:

11. Como es de su conocimiento, el G-24 fue constituido como grupo informal de países para apoyar al Gobierno de Colombia en el cumplimiento de los principios y retos establecidos en la Declaración de Londres, el 10 de julio de 2003.

12. En ese sentido, deseamos subrayar los logros obtenidos por el Gobierno de Colombia en el desarrollo de diferentes temas relacionadas a la Declaración de Londres e invitamos las autoridades a seguir dicho proceso. Quisieramos reafirmar nuestro papel de facilitadores en lo que se refiere a todas las iniciativas relacionadas con la Declaración de Londres, y consideramos que el diálogo es el camino idóneo para la búsqueda de soluciones a las cuestiones internas del país. Reiteramos nuestro compromiso de seguir buscando formas para que la comunidad internacional pueda contribuir al cumplimiento de los objetivos de la Declaración de Londres.

13. Apoyamos la profundización de los mecanismos de diálogo entre el Gobierno de Colombia y la Sociedad Civil, representada por diferentes grupos de organizaciones no-gubernamentales, y con la comunidad internacional, para una mejor coordinación de la cooperación internacional, de modo que el Gobierno pueda alcanzar los objetivos propuestos. Considerando el papel importante que juega la sociedad civil en una democracia abierta y transparente sería valiosa su participación en la reunión de Cartagena.

14. Si bien un largo camino por recorrer, tomamos nota de las distintas medidas que han sido y continúan siendo tomadas con miras a permitir el cumplimiento, por parte del Gobierno colombiano, de las Recomendaciones de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos. El Gobierno de Colombia puede seguir contando con el apoyo de nuestros Gobiernos en este propósito.

15. Destacamos la decisión del Gobierno de Colombia de contribuir al cese del empleo de minas anti-personales, especialmente la destrucción de las reservas militares de las mismas. Reconocemos tal medida como un importante paso y expresión del compromiso para la consolidación del Derecho Internacional Humanitario en Colombia, y exhortamos a los grupos armados ilegales a seguir tal ejemplo, de modo que se proteja a la población civil de los daños causados por el uso de las minas anti-personales.

16. Señalamos que la superación del conflicto y la obtención de la paz con los grupos armados ilegales requieren un marco legal con énfasis en los principios de Verdad, Justicia, y Reparación, que contemple el respeto a los Derechos Humanos y al Derecho Internacional Humanitario. De igual modo, consideramos que los procesos de desmovilización deben abarcar mecanismos de desarme y estrategias claras de reincisión de los individuos que se acojan a la desmovilización. En ese sentido, invitamos al Gobierno a tomar las medidas necesarias.

17. En este contexto reiteramos nuestro llamamiento a todos los grupos armados ilegales para que acuerden un cese de hostilidades y abran espacios a un diálogo de paz.

18. Expresamos nuestra condena por las aberrantes prácticas del secuestro, las desapariciones forzadas y las ejecuciones extra-judiciales. Reiteramos la necesidad de que todas las personas secuestradas en Colombia sean liberadas inmediatamente.

19. Reafirmamos nuestra condena al narcotráfico y a toda forma de violencia y todo acto terrorista, de los que, entre otros, son víctimas la población civil y especialmente los grupos más vulnerables. Recordamos entonces la necesidad de que tales actos sean juzgados con pleno respeto a los Derechos Humanos y al Derecho Internacional Humanitario.

10. Creemos que es de extrema importancia reforzar los mecanismos especiales de apoyo y protección a los segmentos más vulnerables de la sociedad colombiana, como son los desplazados, las comunidades indígenas y afro-colombianas, los líderes sindicales, los defensores de los Derechos Humanos y otros miembros de la sociedad civil que han sufrido amenazas, y en contra de sus familiares, y a las mujeres y niños afectados por el conflicto y la crisis humanitaria.

11. En consecuencia respaldamos el Plan de Acción Humanitaria y la forma participativa en que está elaborando por el Gobierno, con el apoyo de la comunidad internacional y de la sociedad civil. Esperamos la pronta conclusión del proceso.

12. No podemos dejar de reconocer la importante contribución del Sistema de las Naciones Unidas, de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, Organizaciones Internacionales y otros actores en Colombia en la búsqueda de una solución a los

graves problemas de la poblacion afectada por las actividades de los grupos armados ilegales. De modo muy especial, cabe igualmente destacar los esfuerzos emprendidos hacia la busqueda de una paz negociada.

¶13. Igualmente reiteramos nuestro apoyo a la lucha contra el narcotrafico, a la eliminacion de la violencia que este conlleva y a las medidas para superar esta situacion.

¶14. Finalmente, queremos expresar nuestra satisfaccion por la convocatoria a la reunion de alto nivel de seguimiento a la Declaracion de Londres, en Febrero de 2005. Esperamos que la reunion fortalezca la eficacia y a la coordinacion de las actividades de cooperacion internacional, y pueda tomar nota de los avances de la implementacion de las Recomendaciones de la Oficina del Alto Comisionado de Derechos Humanos de las Naciones Unidas en Colombia. Queremos resaltar que los logros en ese campo estan comenzando a constatarse. Los avances que pueden ser vistos no deben impedir el reconocimiento de que aun hay que recorrer un largo camino, para que se puedan alcanzar conquistas duraderas y sonstentibles en la construccion de la paz.

Muchas Gracias.

End Text.
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